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Senate

The Senate met at 10:15 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, a Senator from the State of Rhode Island.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Merciful God, guide our lawmakers and empower them to meet today's challenges.

Lord, our world seems under attack, but we continue to place our trust in You. When we feel fear, remind us that all power belongs to You. We thank You that mere human beings cannot prevail against Your might and majesty.

Lord, keep a record of the tears of those who cry out to You from around the world. Rescue them from their anguish and keep them from defeat.

We pray in Your matchless Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 1, 2022.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SHELDON WHITEHOUSE,

a Senator from the State of Rhode Island, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

POSTAL SERVICE REFORM ACT OF 2022—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 3076, which the clerk will now report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 273, H.R. 3076, a bill to provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

UKRAINE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, with each new day of war in Ukraine, the brutality and sheer evil of Vladimir Putin's aggression against the Ukrainian people becomes more apparent. Failing at securing the country with quick strikes, Russian forces are evidently starting to engage in siege tactics. Over the past 12 hours, the city of

Kharkiv has endured especially heavy fire. Civilian casualties, tragically, are mounting.

Today, every single Member of the Senate must say once again, without equivocation, that the United States stands behind the Ukrainian people and behind all people in all nations who oppose the aggressions of despotism.

In the weeks to come, the Senate must work on a bipartisan basis—and in lockstep with the Biden administration—to pass a strong aid package providing both humanitarian aid and security assistance to Ukraine.

The strongest signal we can send to Vladimir Putin right now is that the United States stands together—together—with the people of Ukraine. Twenty years ago, when our own democracy was attacked right here on our own soil, Americans banded together—Democrat and Republican—to defend our Nation and our democracy.

Today, as democracy faces its greatest crisis in Europe since the end of the Cold War, we must likewise band together in support of our friends in Ukraine. So far, the President has done an excellent job uniting our Nation and our allies against Putin. This was not an easy job. The President had to show patience from some who had urged him to do things that would have torn the relationship apart—the European-American relationship.

Now, because of the President's strong leadership, the Russian President finds himself more isolated and a greater pariah than at any other moment in his time in power. When the full weight of international sanctions takes effect, the consequences will be catastrophic for Putin and the Russian economy.

On the flip side—on the flip side—divisions within the United States or amongst our allies will only strengthen Vladimir Putin and strengthen his resolve that he can win this war, and we must resist him and his deeply cynical efforts however necessary. We must be

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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united in this moment, and so far our unity has precisely been our greatest asset in resisting Putin's aggression: from unity amongst American people in solidarity with Ukraine to America's unity with our European allies. So I hope our Republican colleagues in this Chamber will work with us and the administration to stay unified with a strong aid package.

We don't know how this crisis will evolve, but one thing that will not change is the need to maintain a united front so long as Vladimir Putin continues down his path of violence.

For that reason, the Senate will continue working in the weeks to come on a strong aid package that will erase any doubt where our allegiance lies.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. President, now on another subject, tonight, President Biden will come to the U.S. Capitol and deliver the first State of the Union of his Presidency. Whenever the Nation takes stock of the state of our Union, it is important to know where we are today compared to where we were a single year ago. That, indeed, is a revealing measure of any President's leadership.

And despite the immense challenges we still have, what a difference between last year and this year. At the beginning of last year, we were facing the very worst of the pandemic. Unemployment was over 6 percent. Most forecasters said it would take years—perhaps more—to make significant progress in our recovery.

And, of course, as the Trump Presidency came to a bitter and ignoble end, our country was still in shell shock from the violent assault waged upon this Capitol and upon democracy itself.

Today, as we continue to face the serious challenges of our time, just look at how far we have come. The economy has now grown at the fastest rate in a single year since the 1980s. We have added back the most jobs in a single year than in any President's term ever—6 million jobs. Congress passed—and the President signed—the biggest comprehensive, standalone infrastructure law in generations, which is now fixing our roads and bridges, supply chains, and putting people to work across the country with good-paying jobs. Jobs have always been the No. 1 issue to working families. And on that measure, this first year has been a very, very large success.

And after years of President Trump currying favor with despots and autocrats—we all remember what he said about Vladimir Putin over and over again—the world can now rest assured that the United States is once again a reliable ally in the defense of democracy and our alliances like NATO.

And of course, COVID cases are significantly dropping, communities are reopening, mask mandates are reversing, and over 215 million Americans—215 million—have now been fully vaccinated.

The road has not been easy, and certainly the work is not yet done. The

pain of inflation is being felt around this country and around the world, thanks largely to the disruptions of the pandemic.

The two greatest things vexing the American people are completing our recovery from COVID and getting life back to normal and fighting increasing costs.

And Democrats in the Senate will keep our laser focus on precisely those issues: bringing down costs for the American people so we can reap the full benefits of our historic growth. From relieving shipping bottlenecks to making insulin more affordable, to lowering the cost of food, these are some of the things Americans want, and these are the issues that Democrats right now are working to help solve.

These problems must be handled, and Democrats and the Biden administration continue to work on them like a laser. Again, full recovery from COVID and increasing costs are the two biggest remaining issues on our domestic calendar, and we are focused on them. But even so, we cannot ignore that we have come far.

And let me say this: The State of the Union is also an important and rare moment for the American people to see what the party in office actually stands for.

It is under Democratic leadership that we will continue to work to lower costs, to fight inflation, give working families ladders of opportunity to get to the middle class, and thrive there once they are in the middle class.

Republicans can't say that. Crippled by Trump's cult of personality, beholden to corporate interests and the ultrarich, the Republican agenda would trap Americans in a vortex of deep cynicism—issues that would not solve today's dilemmas—while they pass legislation that overwhelmingly would benefit the very few wealthy people.

If anyone doubts where the Republican Party stands today, all they have to do is read the bizarre, truly stunning plan released by the junior Senator from Florida last week—the head of the Republican Campaign Committee—which proposed everything from raising taxes on low-income Americans to naming a useless and ineffective border wall after Donald Trump.

Imagine, we are talking about getting back to normal and recovering from COVID and reducing costs, and they are talking about naming a border wall after Donald Trump. Which party is going to solve America's problems?

Indeed, an analysis released yesterday by the Tax Policy Center found that low-income households would pay an average of nearly \$1,000 more in taxes next year under a plan like Senator SCOTT's and that nearly all of the new taxes under a plan like his would be paid by those making less than \$100,000 a year—cut the taxes on the wealthy, as they did when Trump was President and they had the majority, and now increase taxes on poor people

and working-class people. That seems to be where the Republicans are at.

This is just wrong, especially at a time when American families are looking for our help in lowering costs. So, tonight, the President will make clear that while we have a lot of work left to do, we have gotten a lot of work done already. And the Democratic Senate will continue, likewise, to focus working on legislation that completes our recovery from COVID and does everything we can to make sure it doesn't come back, to lower costs, to strengthen our buoyant economy, and preserve America's place as a nation of immense opportunity deep into the 21st century. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, President Biden announced his choice to succeed Justice Stephen Breyer on the Supreme Court, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson. Judge Jackson was confirmed less than a year ago to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

Now, every Senator must carefully evaluate Judge Jackson's record, legal views, and judicial philosophy. The nominee, the Senate, the Court, and the American people all deserve a process that is free of embarrassing antics that have become the Democratic Party's routine whenever a Republican President nominates a new Justice—the baseless smears, the shameless distortions. The country deserves a process that is painstakingly rigorous and befitting the seriousness of a lifetime appointment to our highest Court.

I, for one, don't care what Judge Jackson's friends wrote in her high school yearbook. I care that American families are facing major crises that bear directly on Federal courts and our legal system, from surging violent crime and systematically weak prosecutors to open borders and campaigns to shrink religious freedom and the rights of conscience.

What is more, one of our two major political sides increasingly makes noise about attacking the very legitimacy and structure of the Supreme Court itself. The country needs a serious and sobering examination of all of it.

I look forward to discussing these issues and many others with Judge Jackson when I meet with her tomorrow morning.

It has been less than 1 year since Judge Jackson was confirmed to the DC Circuit. Since then, I understand she has authored only two opinions,

both in the last several weeks. I am troubled by the combination of this slim appellate record and the intensity of Judge Jackson's far-left, dark money fan club.

Throughout the jockeying that preceded President Biden's announcement and, indeed, dating back to her prior confirmation last year, Judge Jackson has attracted loyal and intense support from some of the very same dark money, far-left activists who have declared war on the institution of the Court itself. One has to wonder why these leftwing organizations worked so very hard to boost Judge Jackson for this potential promotion.

I am sincerely looking forward to meeting Judge Jackson, to a thorough conversation tomorrow morning, and to the vigorous Senate process that lies ahead.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. President, on another matter, tonight, President Biden will deliver his first State of the Union Address.

One year into his term, the American people have a lot of questions they would like answered: why Democrats plunged ahead with reckless spending that caused the worst inflation in 40 years, why violent crime and illegal immigration are setting all-time records, why the administration haphazardly withdrew from Afghanistan and proposed to cut defense spending after inflation at a time when Russia is trying to redraw maps in human blood.

When President Biden took office 1 year ago, he inherited major tailwinds and a brimming optimism. Brilliant scientists and Operation Warp Speed had developed vaccines in record time, and we were already putting doses in more than a million arms every day. Scientific data had already proven that, after a devastating year for children and families, schools were safe to reopen in person.

Thanks to the historic CARES Act and another targeted, bipartisan stimulus that had just passed weeks earlier, our economic foundations had weathered the pandemic lockdowns and were primed for a roaring recovery back to normalcy and prosperity. Before the pandemic, Republican policies had America as a net exporter of oil for the first time since World War II.

The same voters who gave President Biden the Presidency gave him a razor-thin margin in both Chambers. His only mandate was to govern from the middle.

In his inaugural address, President Biden promised to do just that—to unite and to heal—but for the past year, he and his administration have often behaved like they are trying to fail their own test.

Remember, the President made stifling American energy independence a day-1 priority, killing miles of pipeline and freezing new jobs and new exploration with the stroke of a pen.

Then came the spending bill his administration called the “most progressive domestic legislation in a genera-

tion” that top liberal economists warned would “set off inflationary pressures . . . we have not seen in a generation.” Inflation has surged so steeply, most Americans have seen their real wages actually cut.

Then came the decision to cut and run from the international coalition we led in Afghanistan. President Biden's top military advisers warned that retreat would embolden terrorists, endanger loyal partners, and leave our intelligence capabilities in the region badly handicapped; but the Biden administration failed to heed these warnings and presided over a disastrous withdrawal. Our biggest adversaries took notes, and now, one of them is testing the limits of the West's resolve to oppose his murderous conquest.

Then there are the alarming trends this administration has placed on the back burner but which communities across America are facing every day.

After spending the Presidential campaign talking about potential amnesties, the Biden administration wasted no time in making our southern border more porous. The CBP has reported its highest single-year total for southern border encounters on record—with no sign of a coherent administration response in sight.

Meanwhile, Democrats' response to a historic surge in violent crime has been to double down on the hostility toward police and the prosecution that has encouraged it. Across America, radical local prosecutors are simply declining to charge whole categories of crimes. But, instead of condemning this extremism, the Biden administration has endorsed it, staffing their Justice Department with some of the most outspoken critics of law and order.

Meanwhile, this Justice Department goes out of its way to keep tabs on parents who dare to question teachers unions' veto power over established medical science or who exhibit skepticism toward woke propaganda in public schools.

So that is a heck of a rap sheet, but I am afraid the most damaging legacy of President Biden's first year is bigger than just his unwise policies. Democrats have not just tried pushing bad ideas through our institutions; even under the Presidency of a self-styled institutionalist, the far left has tried to wreck—wreck—our institutions altogether.

Tonight, we will hear from a President who assigned a commission to study packing the Supreme Court because his party didn't like its current ideological makeup.

We will hear from a President who urged his former colleagues to tear up Senate rules in order to rewrite the rules of American elections, likened anyone who opposed these efforts to infamous racists, and continues to stoke racial animus with wild nonsense about a revival of segregation.

We will hear from an administration that has failed its own tests and which, candidly, has the public approval figures to match.

On foreign affairs in particular, I am sincerely rooting for President Biden's success. We need steady, serious, and smart leadership to help guide the West through this perilous time, but on most issues, what the American people deserve tonight is a commitment to drastically change course. If this administration does not majorly correct its course, the American people may correct course for them this coming November.

I am glad the American people will also hear from Governor Kim Reynolds this evening. She is a strong and successful leader who delivers real solutions for the great people of Iowa. She fought COVID without declaring war on freedom or common sense. She backed the blue, stayed tough on crime, and kept Iowa's economy open.

I look forward to hearing her reaction to the President's remarks and her thoughts on how Washington could better serve Middle America.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, every day, Americans get up, go to work, and do their jobs. It is time that all of us in the Senate do ours.

We have five outstanding nominees for the Federal Reserve. They are ready. They are ready to get to work fighting inflation. And that fight is all the more important now as Americans brace for possible impacts at the gas pump and throughout our economy from Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin has made it clear he doesn't care whom he hurts in his maniacal quest for power. He has no problem attacking innocent Ukrainians defending their country and wanting to continue their freedoms and their democracy. He has no regard for hard-working families in the United States and Europe and across the world who can't afford higher energy prices.

Our Senate colleagues of both parties, led in part by the Presiding Officer today, Senator MURPHY, have so far shown a united front against Putin. We are united in the need for punishing sanctions against Putin and his cronies. But along with these sanctions, it is our job to do all we can to make sure Putin's invasion does not hurt hard-working Americans.

Let's be clear. This body, this administration, this Fed will do all it can to combat inflation. When it comes to spikes in energy prices because of Putin's warmongering, our resolve is strong. Our commitment to democracy is certain.

This is not the moment for political stunts. As we deal with the first land

war in Europe since World War II, as we confront inflation, as we work to continue our economic growth—in fact, in the past year, for the first time in two decades, America's economic growth is stronger than China's economic growth. Our rate of growth exceeds China's. As we emerge from this global pandemic, everyone understands we need a full Federal Reserve Board—the first one in nearly a decade. It has been since 2013 before we have had all seven members of the Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve is in some sense the supreme court of our economy, as one Nobel Prize-winning economist, Joe Stiglitz, said.

Americans don't want more political theatrics; they want solutions to take on Putin, to protect our national security, and to bring down costs. There is no more reason for delay.

These nominees have met with every Senator, five nominees. These nominees have met with every Senator who asked for a meeting. These nominees met with staffs of Senators who asked. They offered to meet with many of my colleagues who refused to meet with them and in a couple of cases, met with them and were pretty combative, but that is OK. These nominees did everything we asked of them, and then my colleagues boycotted the vote—something I have never seen happen, not just since I have been chair of Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; I have never seen it since I have been in the Senate, where one party boycotted a vote and stopped that vote from actually happening as a result.

These nominees answered every question posed to them at the hearing. They answered every question submitted for the record. In one nominee's case, she answered almost 200 questions in a 48-hour period, before the deadline. Then more questions came in after the deadline, and she still answered them. All of these nominees have cooperated with both parties in making sure that we can move forward.

If we are going to continue to grow our economy, we need all seven Fed Governors in place. We need these professionals working, debating, and making decisions about monetary policy and interest rates and jobs and tackling inflation. We need these professionals to do the Fed's critical work on something we hadn't really thought much about before—helping prevent cyber attacks in our financial system.

Let me single out one of these five nominees because she has great expertise in an issue the American public is more and more concerned about. We know and we have heard discussions in the media about Putin potentially having interest in cyber attacks against our country, against Europe, against us. Sarah Bloom Raskin—this is the moment for her in her record and expertise. She helped lead efforts in both government and the private sector.

Before she was nominated for the Federal Reserve to be Vice Chair of Supervision, a key position to weigh

risks—risks of cyber attacks, risks of climate change, risks brought about by many, many banks not having the capital that they have held that they should—she served as cochair of the G7 Cyber Expert Group. She is a former Fed Governor. She was No. 2 at Treasury. She was a banking commissioner in Maryland. She has elevated this issue of cyber attacks and cyber attack risks on corporate boards. She played a pivotal role in helping craft the Obama administration's efforts to combat cyber threats in the financial industry.

She is the leader we need at this critical moment on all of these issues, especially cyber. Let's get her on the job. Let's get all of these nominees on the job.

Dr. Lisa Cook and Dr. Philip Jefferson—they understand workers and communities that make our economy work.

Dr. Cook was born in a small town in Georgia, graduated from Spelman, went to Oxford to study as a Truman scholar, and has a Ph.D. from Berkeley.

Dr. Philip Jefferson grew up in the shadow of RFK Stadium—grew up with not a lot of material assets—and worked as a young man at the Federal Reserve before he went back to school and got his Ph.D. He is now dean of a prestigious school in the Carolinas.

As I said, they understand workers. They understand communities.

Chair Powell and Governor Brainard—the two nominees who have already been serving on the Fed—led the Fed's extraordinary effort to support our economy throughout the pandemic.

We need a full Federal Reserve Board. We need a united front to make our economy stronger, to take on inflation, to take on Putin. I implore my Republican colleagues: Just show up. Vote no if you want to vote against these five nominees. That is certainly your right. But we don't come to the Senate where they hand us a paper and say: Check a box—“yes,” “no,” or “I don't think I will show up and do my job.” No. You vote yes or you vote no.

I just implore my colleagues on the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee to show up to cast their votes, and we will then move forward. We need them to make our economy stronger and to take on inflation.

The world is looking at us now. We are still the leader of the free world. To play these political games while in the midst of this awful attack, this potentially growing land war in Europe, to play games on the committee and withhold your votes and not show up to work—let's show the world what a functioning democratic government looks like. Let's get this done for the people whom we serve.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

UKRAINE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, over the past week, the world has watched in

horror as once again an imperialist Russia sets its sights on a sovereign nation in Eastern Europe.

Vladimir Putin's unjustified and unjustifiable war of aggression has already left hundreds dead and created a massive refugee crisis as noncombatants flee Russian attacks.

At this minute, Russia continues to press forward with attacks on several fronts, with a focus on the capital city of Kyiv, but courageous Ukrainian resistance, both from its formal military and from an increasing number of civilians, is slowing Russia. Kyiv and other major cities remain under significant pressure and could fall within days, but Ukraine is demonstrating a fierce resolve and continuing to blunt Russian advances.

Russia has also been a victim of its own deficiencies, such as poor targeting, broken supply lines, and a limited ability to fight at night. Surprisingly, Russia has not yet established full air superiority, with some Ukrainian jets still flying and some air-to-surface systems still available. This means Ukraine can still fly combat sorties and strike back against Russia. Similarly, Ukrainian command, control, and communications appear to be intact.

How long these conditions can last, however, is an open question, which underscores the urgent need to continue to provide Ukraine with the weapons it needs to stay in this fight and to bring the free nations of the world together to sanction and isolate Russia for its unjustifiable aggression. This is Ukraine's fight, but the United States and allies can provide weapons and humanitarian assistance while imposing swift and severe sanctions against Russia.

We must also shore up NATO to send a signal to Putin that the United States will make good on our defense commitments. This is essential not only to help prevent this war from spreading farther into Eastern Europe but to send a message to China that similar acts of aggression will not be tolerated. We know Taiwan remains in the crosshairs of President Xi, and just as Putin is flexing his power in Europe, communist China is looking for any opening to pounce.

Many pundits have speculated about Putin's mindset and ultimate goal with this attack and how far he would be willing to go despite mounting losses. I think it is clear he is willing to take it to the next level. We should be concerned that as Russia continues to meet heavy resistance, Putin will order his generals to increase pressure no matter the cost—this means no matter the cost to his own troops, many of them young soldiers and conscripts, and no matter the cost to the Ukrainian people.

Putin's failures in Ukraine and mounting international pressure may also spur Putin to escalate beyond Ukraine and lash out against the West. He has already ordered his nuclear

forces on high alert—yet another unprovoked escalation that has drawn immediate condemnation.

The United States and other free nations must match the resolve of the Ukrainian people and respond with swift and severe consequences for Putin and his cronies. The people of Ukraine have shown their fierce determination to fight, drawing inspiration from emerging stories of heroism.

A reported “Ghost of Kyiv” fighter pilot has allegedly scored six kills against Russian jets. It may only be an urban legend, but it has captured Ukraine’s underdog grit nonetheless.

Ukrainian border guards on a remote island in the Black Sea refused to surrender to the Russian Navy in a defiant radio transmission.

A Ukrainian soldier sacrificed himself on Friday by manually detonating charges to collapse a bridge when there was not enough time to detonate them remotely before a Russian column closed in.

A Ukrainian woman defiantly addressed Russian occupiers, offering them sunflower seeds and telling them to put the seeds in their pockets so that sunflowers will grow when they die in Ukraine.

Ukraine has handed out over 18,000 weapons to reservists around Kyiv, with social media posts showing men and women lining up to volunteer. Ukrainian Parliament Member Kira Rudik is taking up arms, hoping to inspire other women to join the resistance. Ukrainian media is broadcasting instructions on how to make Molotov cocktails to attack Russian vehicles.

Then there is President Zelenskyy, who has led the Ukrainians with extraordinary resolution and courage. President Zelenskyy is believed to be Putin’s top target, and there are reports of Russian forces being sent into Ukraine for the express purpose of assassinating Ukraine’s President. Yet, according to press reports, when he was offered the chance to evacuate, Zelenskyy said:

The fight is here. I need ammunition, not a ride.

Former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has also been visible in Kyiv, saying Ukraine will resist “forever” when asked how long the nation can hold out.

Ukraine’s resolve has been on display for the world to see, as have Vladimir Putin’s true colors. Putin was given every chance to choose diplomacy and peace. Instead, he chose war.

Putin has offered wild justifications for his attacks, suggesting that Ukraine somehow posed a nuclear threat to Russia and is governed by neo-Nazis and drug addicts. He has also called for Ukrainian soldiers to defect and to “take power into their own hands.” It may be that Russia is laying the groundwork for a narrative that there is an organic pro-Russian contingent within Ukraine, possibly within the Ukrainian military itself, to be stood up as an “authentic” coup to

carry out regime change. Putin has also claimed that the Ukrainian military is moving equipment into residential neighborhoods, which would be consistent with a resistance or insurgency defensive posture but will also give Russia pretext to increase civilian targeting.

Vladimir Putin is apparently on a delirious quest to restore the Soviet Union and once again see Ukraine under its thumb. Unfortunately for him, he apparently reckoned without the people of Ukraine. Each missile that strikes a village, every rocket that strikes an apartment building, every tank that rattles by a once-quiet town will only further stoke Ukrainian’s resentment of the Kremlin.

Judging by the way Ukrainians are fighting, I don’t think they will ever accept Russian rule. As the growing number of Russians boldly protesting in the streets—from Moscow to St. Petersburg to Siberia—and online are making clear, Putin is also losing the trust of everyday Russians, particularly of the younger generations whom he is likely leaning on for conscripts and who will inherit a decimated economy. Even the daughter of Putin’s own spokesman posted on Instagram “No to war!” which went viral before it was deleted.

Russian protests have spread to more than 50 cities, and, in keeping with his KGB past, Putin’s response has been to detain protesters and restrict access to Facebook and Twitter. Unfortunately for him, however, it has become clear that he will not be able to fully hide the truth from the Russian people. Russians are clearly coming to know Putin as a murderous warmonger who will isolate them from the free world.

It is unfortunate that the world did not take a more aggressive stance against Vladimir Putin before he invaded the sovereign nation of Ukraine. I supported sanctions against Nord Stream 2 and the other punitive measures of the NYET Act before Russia made its attack. It is too bad it took Putin actually going to war for the world to get serious about checking Russian aggression. However, I am pleased that the United States and our partners are finally moving forward with unprecedented sanctions against Russia’s economy.

The United States is sanctioning Russia’s central bank and freezing its assets in the United States, and a growing number of nations are united to block Russia from the SWIFT financial transaction messaging system. If blocked from this system, Russia will have to conduct run-of-the-mill banking transactions directly between banks, adding costly delays that should discourage any business with their banks. Putin has also joined the select list of despots, like Kim Jong-un, individually sanctioned by the United States.

While I am glad we have taken these steps, there is more we can and should do, including directly targeting the

lifeblood of the Russian economy, and that is Russia’s energy sector. Every dollar the world denies Putin by not buying his oil and gas is one less dollar he has to spend on his war of aggression in Ukraine.

The conflict in Ukraine is also a timely reminder that energy independence is not only economic security but national security and that here in the United States, we need to do everything we can to get our energy producers off the bench and into the game so that we don’t have to rely on foreign regimes for energy supplies.

The situation is also a reminder of how important it is to make a robust investment in our own military to restore our Nation’s readiness. The Vladimir Putins of the world will only respond to strength, and we need to ensure that our Nation’s military is prepared to meet threats from traditional state actors as well as terrorist organizations. When it comes to dictators like Putin, the best way to secure peace is through robust deterrence.

As Congress reviews the administration’s supplemental request for foreign security and humanitarian assistance, we cannot offset this funding by degrading our own defense. This is a military emergency—just ask the people of Ukraine—and we should treat it as such. I hope Congress will come to a sensible solution in the days and weeks ahead.

My thoughts and prayers today are with the people of Ukraine. I hope they know that their courage and determination have inspired millions, and I pray that the United States and freedom-loving countries the world over will continue to do our part by providing the lethal aid Ukrainians need to stay in this fight and by implementing biting sanctions that will leave Putin and his cronies out in the cold.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I am going to join a number of my Republican colleagues on the floor today to talk about the State of the Union.

Tonight, President Biden will come to Congress to give his annual State of the Union Address. He is going to try to do his very best to paint a rosy picture of the status quo. No matter how hard the President of the United States tries tonight, Joe Biden cannot hide the fact that his policies have put America in crisis. There is a war in Europe. We have the worst inflation in 40 years, the worst violent crime in 25 years, the highest prices at the pump for gasoline in 7 years, and the most illegal crossings into the United States ever. So no matter what Joe Biden says tonight, he is the one who has created these crises. We are less secure at home and abroad than the day Joe Biden took office.

Over the last 10 months, the American people have said loud and clear

that inflation is a top concern, and Joe Biden has only poured fuel on the fire. He told us that the fire would burn itself out quickly. Yet inflation has only burned hotter.

Yesterday, the Associated Press put it this way. The Associated Press said: "On cusp of Biden speech, a state of disunity, funk, and peril." The article goes on to say: "Today's national psyche is one of fatigue and frustration." They go on to say it is "the malaise of our time."

In March of 2021, Joe Biden signed the single largest spending bill in American history. He put \$2 trillion on America's credit card, flooded the country with cash, government cash. Since then, prices have gone up faster and faster than wages.

Joe Biden repeatedly said inflation would be "transitory." He said it month after month after month as people felt their paychecks being eaten away. In December, Joe Biden said inflation had "peaked." Joe Biden has been dead wrong again and again and again. The American people are reminded of this every time they go to the gas station, every time they go to the grocery store, and every time they pay their heating bill. It is no wonder Joe Biden's approval rating on handling inflation, which is the No. 1 concern of the American people, is just 31 percent. That means Republicans don't approve, Independents don't approve, and a lot of Democrats don't approve of how the President has handled their No. 1 concern.

So tonight I expect President Biden will once again ask Congress to pass another reckless tax-and-spending spree. He will call it Build Back Better or, more accurately, "Break Your Back" bill. I am not sure what he is going to call it. It is going to be Build Back Better part 2.

No matter what the President says tonight, the American people are going to continue to say, "No, thank you," to all this additional government spending.

The American people do not trust this President or the Democrats to tackle the issues that they care about. Inflation is eating away their paychecks and has been doing so now month after month after month.

Millions of people are entering this country illegally. Shelves are going empty. No whitewashing by this President can cover up this painful reality for the American people.

So tonight I will listen carefully to what the President has to say. The American people don't want to listen to a fairytale tonight. They are not looking for a bedtime story from the President of the United States. The American people are looking for real answers.

Joe Biden can brag if he wants. The American people know the truth. America is in crisis. The American people understand that. And the American people know that the person to blame for all of this is squarely right there,

the man behind the podium, the President of the United States.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING RICHARD C. BLUM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, two things, and the first one is very short but something that is sorrowful that we have to talk about, Senator FEINSTEIN losing her husband. Senator FEINSTEIN is a friend of mine. You get very well acquainted with people when you work with—like when I was chairman of the Judiciary, and she was ranking member. For years before that, she and I chaired or cochaired the drug caucus.

So we all know that she lost her husband of 42 years over this weekend. We know that he had a long battle with cancer. Dick and DIANNE supported each other during everything life threw at them, and they had fun along the way. Together, they were even stronger. DIANNE has dedicated herself to working for the people of California, and she had no better confidant and supporter than her husband Dick.

Many Americans think that Senators of opposing political parties don't get along, and that is not the case. All 100 of us know that here. It is too bad that journalists always make controversy the center of everything, so people—at least in Iowa—have an extraordinary view that we never speak to each other, and that is not the case.

And I would just point out how Senator FEINSTEIN and I have worked together. Barbara and I express our deepest sympathy to DIANNE and her family on Dick's passing, as they grieve the loss of a life well lived.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, now to another point that I have come to talk to my colleagues about.

In Biden's inaugural address a year ago, he called repeatedly for unity. He said:

We can treat each other with dignity and respect. We can join forces, stop the shouting, and lower the temperature. For without unity, there is no peace, only bitterness and fury. No progress, only exhausting outrage.

I was glad to hear him say all of those good intentions. I took it, really, as an invitation for bipartisanship. It sounded like the Joe Biden that I knew as a Senator for the 28 years that he and I worked together. So I reached out early on to offer to work with him on lowering the cost of prescription drugs.

But right out of the gate, he rejected good-faith offers from all of us to work together on another COVID relief package, as Republicans and Democrats had on five others throughout the year of 2020.

Even with the narrowest of margins, and you can't get much more narrow than a 50-50 Senate, President Biden let his party's agenda be dictated by the most radical progressive wing of his party. The extreme radicals refused to compromise on a wish list having nothing to do with COVID.

President Biden should instead have listened to Professor Larry Summers. He was President Clinton's Treasury Secretary and President Obama's Chief Economic Adviser. Professor Summers warned that all the spending the progressives were insisting on would fuel the fires of inflation, and now we know how right Professor Summers was.

But that \$2 trillion spending binge just whet the appetite of the very young radicals in the Democratic Party who don't remember the 1970s' stagflation. And if they had memories of stagflation, they willingly ignored history.

Instead of offering to find common ground on issues like prescription drug pricing, the Democrats wasted much of the year trying to spend another \$4 trillion on a slew of brandnew entitlement programs.

His one significant bipartisan achievement, passing a bipartisan infrastructure bill, was all but gift wrapped and handed to him by a bipartisan group of Senators.

Even then, liberal Democrats nearly derailed it by insisting its fate be tied to the passage of their unrelated liberal spending spree that is referred to as Build Back Better. Opponents called it "Build Back Worse."

Thankfully, moderate Democrats in the House successfully delinked the two bills, as we did in the Senate, and sent the infrastructure bill to the President's desk. So that was a bipartisan victory for the President, and it was a victory for bipartisanship in this Senate.

Now, even more importantly, thanks to the leadership of Senator MANCHIN, along with the principled stand of Senator SINEMA, Democrats multibillion-dollar liberal spending spree floundered—Build Back Better floundered. As a result, we avoided piling even more gasoline into the inflation fire.

But as Larry Summers warned and Senator MANCHIN feared, the fire of inflation is already burning brightly. It is picking the pockets of hard-working, middle-class Americans, who are paying more for gas and groceries, and, for that matter, everything else.

President Biden's reluctance to stand up to the radical voices in his own party or listen to moderate criticism has led to failure after failure.

There is President Biden's decision to shut down the Keystone Pipeline day 1 of his administration and, more recently, to not shut down Russia's Nord Stream 2 Pipeline.

But now, thanks to Germany and the Ukraine situation, that is shut down—but no thanks to President Biden.

He pulled the few remaining troops out of Afghanistan in a chaotic hurry, leaving Americans stranded.

He has even accused friends across the aisle, people of my political party whom he has long worked with, as being Jim Crow racists.

This isn't the uniting President that he promised that he would be on January 20 of last year.

The good news is that it is not too late to change course. So, hopefully, he will get a big voice from both political parties about it is not too late to change course and work in a bipartisan way.

There is reason to believe that he is trying to be Franklin Delano Roosevelt. But trying to be FDR without FDR's popularity and FDR's supermajority in the Congress—that approach has failed.

I invite President Biden to face reality, ignore the radicals in his political party, whether in Congress or on his staff, and work across the aisle in a way I know we can. I saw that regularly for 28 years. Be the President you promised to be at your inauguration, in other words.

The American people want action on issues that they are facing this very day: inflation, spike in violent crimes, prescription drug costs, open borders, and you could have a myriad of other things.

I could name three things that I am part of a bipartisan effort to get things done: One, take on Big Tech, KLOBUCHAR and GRASSLEY; take on the big meatpackers, GRASSLEY and TESTER and FISCHER and WYDEN; and take on prescription drugs, as WYDEN and I worked on that prior to last year, when Democrats took over, and they forgot all about it.

Let's get some of these things done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

ENERGY

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the need to immediately increase our domestic energy production to counter Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

For an energy-rich nation such as ours, it is unacceptable that our country has been increasingly reliant on Russia for oil. In recent months, we have imported nearly 600,000 barrels per day of Russian oil. At the same time, the Biden administration has worked systematically to shut down domestic U.S. oil and gas production.

American oil and gas producers, including those in North Dakota, have proven that they have the capacity to produce more oil here at home. We had gotten to 1.5 million barrels of oil a day production; now, 1.1 million barrels a day.

We can do more; other States can do more. We need to do it not only for our consumers here at home but to help our allies in Europe.

Our economy, quality of life, and security depend on access to low-cost, dependable energy from all sources, both traditional and renewable.

The Biden administration's hostile energy policies treat America's abun-

dant oil, gas, and coal reserves differently, and they treat it as a liability.

We are seeing the direct consequence of that approach, allowing investment and dollars to flow to energy producers like Russia, Iran, and other countries that leverage their own energy against our interests, with little or no regard for environmental stewardship; whereas, our environmental stewardship is the best in the world.

It is time we harness our vast strategic energy reserves and maintain our status as a global energy powerhouse.

President Biden will soon deliver his State of the Union Address, and it is time he works with us to support our domestic energy producers and abandon his failed approach to energy policy.

Each additional barrel of oil we can produce here at home strengthens our economic and national security and helps our allies. Each additional U.S. barrel offsets production from Russia and other adversaries. Each additional barrel of oil helps reduce prices for American consumers, and because energy is built into virtually everything we consume, lowering energy costs helps bring down inflation. That means empowering and encouraging our domestic producers and reversing the Biden administration's policies that curtail production.

To start, the Interior Department needs to immediately end the leasing moratorium and hold previously postponed lease sales, both onshore and offshore.

We need to expand our energy infrastructure to ensure efficient delivery to consumers. That includes approving the Keystone XL Pipeline, which is legislation that I led, and we passed during the Obama administration. Now, it was vetoed by President Obama, but it was my bill. We approved it in this Chamber, approved it in the House, got it to the President, and the President vetoed it. If he hadn't, we would have Keystone Pipeline today, bringing millions of more barrels of energy to our country and to our allies, working with our closest friend and ally, Canada.

We need to strengthen our energy trade with Canada—as I said, obviously, one of our most important allies.

It also includes building new natural gas pipelines to connect areas like New England to domestic gas reserves in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

We need to expand liquefied natural gas—LNG—exports to our European allies to provide cleaner, more efficient alternatives to Russian gas.

The gas that we send from our LNG facilities to Europe, on a lifecycle basis, has 41 percent less emissions than Russian gas.

I will soon be introducing the American Independence from Russia Act, bicameral legislation, with Representative CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS, which requires the President to provide Congress with an energy security plan

that, first, evaluates U.S. oil imports and exports; second, assesses our energy security risks based on oil imports; and, third, encourages U.S. domestic oil production to offset Russian imports. This is all about a return to regulatory certainty to protect our capacity to produce energy, and that means helping producers attract capital investment.

It is time we unleash the full potential of U.S. energy producers to strengthen our energy independence and weaken authoritarian adversaries like Russia and others. In addition to strengthening national security, robust and domestic energy production will help provide lower energy costs and relief from inflation for hard-working American families. We need to unleash our energy resources for the sake of our own consumers and our allies.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SINEMA). The Senator from Iowa.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, tonight, the President will deliver the annual State of the Union Address. And I have to admit, as a result of President Biden's policies over the past year, nearly everything is up—consumer prices, up; violent crime, up; the national debt, illegal border crossings, fatal drug overdoses, our trade deficit—they are all up.

But what isn't up is the public's view of the President and his policies. In poll after poll, the majority of Americans disapprove of the job that President Biden is doing. On nearly every key issue facing the country, Americans, by and large, just do not think Mr. Biden is up to the job. And more than two-thirds of Americans lack confidence that President Biden can bring the country closer together, something he promised the American people that he would do. Folks, this is really no surprise since it is, after all, the President's unpopular partisan policies that are driving Americans further apart.

President Biden might try to mask himself as a moderate, but no one is being fooled. Behind the mask, the real Biden agenda is more mandates from Washington, higher prices for all Americans, and less security at home and abroad. As a direct result of mandates imposed by this administration, for example, thousands of healthcare workers have lost their jobs at a time when we need them more than ever.

And because of the massive amount of money being printed in Washington, inflation is soaring at its highest point in 40 years. The cost of food, gas, housing, and just about everything else is significantly more expensive today than it was before President Biden was sworn into office.

The President chose leftwing climate fantasies over national security. His doctrine of appeasement has resulted in America becoming more energy dependent on foreign adversaries like Russia for the energy that is necessary to heat our homes and keep our country on the move.

And with the Russian military on the march in Europe and terrorists in control of Afghanistan once again, the national and economic security of our Nation has been set back decades. It is really quite stunning and gravely concerning what an incredible mess President Biden has created in such a short period of time.

Yet the White House is attempting to convince the American people that everything is fine. The President called his hastily ordered exit from Afghanistan an “extraordinary success,” despite leaving thousands of Americans and allies behind.

And the Biden administration has repeatedly denied that rising prices and empty shelves are even a problem, while fanning the flames of inflation and out-of-control spending. Folks, if simply printing money could solve the problem for us, we would be living in a utopia right now since Washington spent nearly \$7 trillion last year alone. Instead, every American is feeling the pinch of Bidenomics—because spending is not the solution, folks; it is the problem.

And you would think that in light of Putin's aggression and the threats from other adversaries, our Commander in Chief would be focused on strengthening and modernizing our defenses. Instead, funding for the Department of Defense is being held hostage by the President and Democrats in Congress until the widely popular 50-year-old ban on taxpayer funding for abortions is repealed.

Folks, is this really the time to play abortion politics with our Nation's national security?

Having spent the last half-century in Washington, President Biden is totally out of touch with the everyday needs of Iowa families. And the world around us has become much more dangerous under his watch.

Just remember as you listen to his address, every time the President proposes increasing Washington spending, that translates into higher prices and taxes for you. Every new government expansion the President proposes means more Washington mandates and control over you. And no matter who he blames for the security crises we are in now, it is the President's poor decisions and lack of leadership that continue to make our Nation less safe at home and abroad.

To get our Nation moving in the right direction, we need a forward-looking, freedom-first agenda. To ensure our families have and can afford the food and essentials they need, the supply chain must be fixed. To protect and prepare our children for the future, we need schools to be a place of learning, not “woke” indoctrination. To protect our Nation from foreign threats, we need to ensure U.S. energy independence and the strength of our military remains unmatched. And to form a more perfect union, Washington needs to stop micromanaging how we live our lives and start abiding by the

most important mandates in America, the ones that are listed in our Constitution's Bill of Rights, which protect us from government intrusion.

These goals don't represent a partisan platform but rather an inclusive agenda for all Americans that puts each one of us back in charge of the direction of our own lives. It is a vision based on freedom, on liberty, on opportunity.

Folks, I know this vision works because that is exactly what is happening in my home State of Iowa under the leadership of our Governor and my friend, Kim Reynolds. She has led with Iowa common sense and compassion since day one.

Right now, Governor Reynolds is expanding opportunities for everyone by cutting taxes to help families and small businesses. She is standing up for our freedom, putting our kids first, and ensuring parents have their voices heard.

Under her leadership, Iowa was the first State to reopen our schools during the pandemic. Governor Reynolds is pushing back on the massive Washington overreach from President Biden and standing up for our way of life. And she is fighting to keep the left's “woke” agenda out of Iowa.

Folks, Governor Kim Reynolds is the perfect choice for the Republican response to tonight's State of the Union Address and her record of success in Iowa is the ideal contrast to the life in Joe Biden's America.

Things are not fine, folks. You and I know that, and we feel that every day. But Governor Reynolds—her leadership and her vision for a better future—leaves me very optimistic about what lies ahead for America.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, tonight, on the other side of the Capitol, President Joe Biden will tell the American people what a great job he has done. He will read a speech, and seated behind him will be NANCY PELOSI and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Not even the most extreme Democratic partisan can believe that the last 14 months have been a success. Joe Biden campaigned for President as a reasonable and centrist moderate, and he abandoned every one of those promises the moment he put his hand on the Bible. Instead, he has handed the agenda over to the most radical and extreme voices on the far left, and the result for the country has been disastrous.

In 14 months, we have seen trillions of new spending and trillions of new debt, the highest debt in the history of our Nation.

We have seen a war on domestic energy production. In his first week in office, Joe Biden shut down the Keystone Pipeline, destroying 11,000 jobs, destroying 8,000 union jobs. He halted new leasing on Federal lands and offshore drilling, and the predictable re-

sult of launching an assault on domestic energy production is that energy prices skyrocketed.

But for that matter, everything has skyrocketed—food, electricity, rent, home, lumber, gasoline, heat, every basic expense. Working families are suffering and especially seniors—especially those on fixed incomes.

Then we have our southern border—the absolute chaos and crisis on our southern border—over 2 million people crossing illegally into this country, the worst rate of illegal immigration in 61 years. And it is worth noting that Biden inherited, the year before, the lowest rate of illegal immigration in 45 years. So he turned success into failure because he implemented the radical leftwing ideas of open borders from the extreme left.

The crime and chaos of disease coming from 2 million illegal immigrants is compounded domestically by the extreme left's war on the police. We have seen the far left advocating abolishing the police, advocating defunding the police. We have seen George Soros' funded district attorney releasing violent criminals. And as a result, crime is up, murders are up, carjacking is up. And the Biden administration has embraced that radical agenda, nominating not one, but two of the leading advocates of abolishing the police to senior positions in the Department of Justice. Unfortunately, every single Democrat in this Chamber voted to confirm those leading advocates for abolishing the police.

We have seen Joe Biden implementing illegal and unconstitutional vaccine mandates; standing up and firing soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines; advocating that doctors be fired, that nurses be fired, that police officers be fired, that firefighters be fired, that airline captains and flight attendants be fired—an assault on our liberties. And as disastrous as the domestic policy has been and as disastrous as the economic policy has been, the foreign policy has been even worse.

We saw in Afghanistan the catastrophic withdrawal—the surrender to the Taliban, leaving Americans behind. And unfortunately, when that happened, every enemy of America, they looked to Washington, they looked to the Oval Office, and they took the measure of the man in the Oval Office; and they all concluded that the President was weak and feckless and ineffective.

As I said at the time when we withdrew from Afghanistan, the chances of Russia invading Ukraine have increased tenfold. As I said at the time, the chances of China invading Taiwan have increased tenfold.

When the President is weak, when he is ineffective, our enemies are on advance and every region of the world you look at is worse for America.

Russia has launched the largest war in Europe since World War II. China is more aggressive—is running concentration camps with a million Uighurs, is

murdering and torturing innocent people in China.

And mind you, when I brought a vote to the Senate floor that said the U.S. Government should not purchase goods manufactured using slave labor in Chinese concentration camps, every Democrat but one voted no.

These are extreme positions. This is not the mainstream. This is not the center. This is the radical and extreme left. NANCY PELOSI will not portray it on her face, but she knows in January she will no longer be Speaker of the House. And I will say, Joe Biden's becoming President was the best thing that ever happened to Vladimir Putin.

Biden began his Presidency by surrendering to Putin, waving the sanctions on Nord Stream 2; sanctioned bipartisan sanctions that I authored that had stopped that pipeline, that had stopped an invasion of Ukraine; and Biden decided surrendering to our adversary was a better policy. As Neville Chamberlain has demonstrated, appeasement doesn't work.

The state of America is strong, but the state of the Union and the state of the Federal Government in Washington is disastrous. Yet the one bit of bright light on the horizon that I am confident President Biden will not point to is that the American people will vote in November, and I believe they will change the path we are on.

We have seen the disaster of the extreme radical left. If Biden could remember the Joe Biden who swore me into office, the Joe Biden who swore many of my colleagues into office, the Joe Biden whom we served with—if he could remember that Joe Biden—it would be a very different administration. Sadly, this White House has decided the radical, extreme, socialist left sets the agenda, and the results of that agenda are playing out for families all across the country.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I, along with Senators Hagerty, Peters, and Portman, be recognized to speak for up to 5 minutes each before the scheduled recess.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, I was not intending to speak. As the Presiding Officer knows, I was presiding, and she was kind to spell me.

Yet, as I was hearing colleagues talk on the floor about the state of our country, what I was hearing from my Republican colleagues were words like "malaise," "funk," "disaster," and I was seeing visuals of a house on fire. So I was compelled to stand and just offer a few extemporaneous remarks.

I don't think America is a disaster. I don't think America is on fire. I don't think America is in a deep, unyielding malaise. I have heard colleagues talk about the situation in the world and use the "appeasement" word. I have

heard language, both in committee hearings this morning and here on the floor, that I would characterize as a kind of a "blame America first" attitude. If something is going on—if a dictator like Vladimir Putin acts in a horrific way—it has got to be America's fault. It has got to be Joe Biden's fault. I don't think our instinct should be to blame America first when dictators in the world undertake despicable actions.

What I have noticed in these comments today in trashing our President and in trashing the country—sort of a cherry-picking of evidence—is that my colleagues have brought up some things that are really very legitimate concerns. Inflation is a very, very legitimate concern that has to be addressed. Yet I have listened to these speeches, and not one has talked about record job growth. Not one has talked about strong GDP growth. Not one has talked about dramatic increases in the wages and salaries of low- and moderate-income people.

Is that because my colleagues are unaware of those things?

No. They know these things. They are just choosing not to discuss them because what they want to do is to paint a picture of an American malaise, an American funk, an American disaster. That is not what this country is. Yet my colleagues are very willing to paint a false picture by omitting key evidence.

I listened to the speeches this morning, and not one mentioned that COVID deaths and hospitalizations are coming down dramatically and that the CDC now has said, in most of my Commonwealth and in most of the country, you needn't wear masks indoors. I would think they might have mentioned that because part of the reason for this recent progress is the vaccinations; it is the vaccines that were developed in the previous administration. They could have taken a little credit for it, but, no, they didn't mention it at all. COVID is coming down. There is strong economic growth, strong job growth, strong wage and salary growth.

Around the world, a NATO that the previous President trashed when he was cozying up to the dictator Vladimir Putin is demonstrating to the entire world that, when it is resolved to unify, the power of American-led alliances is a huge force for good in this world.

So I am just trying to grapple with the one-sided presentation of American disaster, American malaise, American funk. Here is the way I understand it.

The last 2 years have been brutal. The death toll due to COVID is now nearly 950,000. It will eclipse a million. I am 64 years old as of a couple of days ago. It has been the hardest 2 years in my life and for our country with the death, the illness, the economic devastation, the job loss. It has been brutal here, and it has been brutal all around the world, and it is not completely in the rearview mirror yet.

I suspect what you are going to hear President Biden say tonight—this is my intuition; I don't have knowledge. He is going to acknowledge the incredible pain we have been living under in this country and around the world for the last 2 years—nearly unprecedented in a century. He is going to point out that there are still significant challenges and that there is still too high a percentage of Americans who haven't taken advantage of these vaccines.

Yes, inflation is a problem, and there are problems that we have to deal with, but when you look at strong job growth and strong wage growth and strong GDP growth and when you look at declining case numbers, I will tell you what I see. I see the beginnings of something that we often see in American life—an American comeback. We are comeback people. We are comeback people.

A friend of mine once said: Tough times don't last. Tough people do.

We are tough, tough people.

As I travel around Virginia—and I was traveling around Virginia last week—I don't fundamentally see funk or malaise or "poor, poor, pitiful me" or blaming America for the woes of the world or blaming Joe Biden for the reality of a tough situation we have been living through. I see people with their chins up and their heads held high, who will acknowledge that we have challenges and that we have got problems to solve but who believe that we are on our way to a better chapter after a very difficult last couple of years.

That is the can-do spirit I see around Virginia. That is the can-do spirit, I believe, that has always characterized Americans, not a "we are on fire"; "it is a malaise time"; "it is a funk time." No. I see a can-do spirit and the beginnings of an American comeback underway after what has been the most painful 2 years during my 64 here on the planet.

I don't know, if I am right, whether that is good news or bad news for my colleagues who are here on the floor, painting the negative picture. I would think it would be good news. But if it were good news, why wouldn't I have heard some acknowledgment of job growth or wage growth or GDP growth? Why wouldn't I have heard acknowledgment about COVID cases coming down?

We do need to work together. The Presiding Officer inspired all of us with her work on the bipartisan infrastructure bill, which, as I was traveling around Virginia last week—and I am sure most of us were doing this in our States—my mayors and my State officials and my local economic development officials were talking with excitement about what this will mean in terms of the rebuilding of American communities where we haven't invested in infrastructure for a very long time.

I don't think this is a moment when the leadership class of this country should be amplifying pessimism about

this country. I think it is a moment when the leadership class of this country should be amplifying an optimistic, can-do message that I think is in accord with the values of Virginians and the values of Americans. I suspect that that kind of a message—the acknowledgment of the difficult reality but the foundation being laid for the beginnings of an American comeback after 2 tough years—is the message that we are going to hear from President Biden tonight.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

SUPPORTING REOPENING THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL BUILDING AND SENATE OFFICE BUILDINGS TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, I rose in this Chamber 2 weeks ago to again urge the Senate to reopen the U.S. Capitol and to reopen the Senate office buildings. At that time, Democrats objected to my resolution in support of reopening. Two weeks later, it has become even more clear that the American public is tired of government mandates and of COVID shutdowns.

Democrats have exploited the pandemic to execute a power grab over American life—a power grab that allows Democrats to dictate whether children can attend schools, whether Americans can keep their jobs and operate their businesses, and how elections are conducted. These Big Government lockdowns and mandates have caused irreparable damage that will be felt for generations to come. As we move ahead, we mustn't lose sight of this lesson.

On the bright side, even the Biden administration is seeing the poll numbers, and they are adjusting the science accordingly. On Friday, the CDC changed its guidance once again. Now indoor masks are not recommended for most Americans. Masks are no longer required on either side of the Capitol Building. Why, even Washington, DC, has opened up and lifted its mask mandate. Amazingly, all of this happened just in time for the State of the Union Address.

The only science that is being followed here is the political science, but, thankfully, America is returning to normal. Americans everywhere are safely living their lives—going to work and school, visiting stores, attending events, and gathering with their families and their friends. They shouldn't have to know somebody in order to visit their Representatives, to take a tour of the Capitol, to get into this building.

It is time for the lockdown on democracy to come to an end. Today, I am once again asking my colleagues to rejoin reality and reopen the Capitol to those to whom it belongs—the American people.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules

and Administration be discharged from further consideration and that the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 512.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 512) supporting reopening the United States Capitol Building and Senate Office Buildings to the American people.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. HAGERTY. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to; that the preamble be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 512) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of February 15, 2022, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, I am glad that the Senate has agreed to my resolution to reopen the Capitol, and I urge the House of Representatives to pass a very similar resolution that was introduced in that body so that all parts of the Capitol Complex are open to the American people.

I also stand ready to work with my colleagues and with the Capitol Police to implement this resolution so that we can welcome the American people back into their Capitol as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

POSTAL SERVICE REFORM ACT OF 2022—Motion to Proceed—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

H.R. 3076

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, last night, the Senate came together for the American people and overwhelmingly voted to move forward on historic, bipartisan, bicameral, and long-overdue reforms that will help ensure the stability and the long-term success of the U.S. Postal Service.

The Postal Service is one of our Nation's oldest and most trusted institutions. It serves as a critical lifeline for millions of Americans, including seniors and veterans in rural communities who expect the Postal Service to deliver vital mail, including supplies and medications.

However, for more than 15 years, this public service and its dedicated workers have been hindered by burdensome financial requirements. The need to quickly pass these balanced reforms, which are broadly supported by the American people, has become increasingly urgent.

One persistent burden has been a requirement to prefund every single cent of healthcare benefits that every single

postal worker employee will use when they eventually retire, no matter how far off that may be. This is something that no business in America is required to do, and for good reason. It makes no practical sense, and it has imposed an enormous cost on the Postal Service that has threatened their ability to provide reliable and timely delivery.

In recent years, we have seen firsthand how burdensome policies have driven the Postal Service to resort to harsh measures to cut costs and, as a result, compromise delivery service. We must act now to set this critical institution on a sustainable financial footing by passing the Postal Service Reform Act.

This bipartisan, commonsense legislation will save the Postal Service more than \$49 billion in the next 10 years by eliminating the aggressive prefunding requirement for retiree health benefits and by integrating postal retirees' healthcare with Medicare.

These changes will help ensure the Postal Service, which is self-sustaining and does not receive taxpayer funding, can continue serving the people and avoid making severe cuts down the line that would impact millions of Americans. These reforms will also require the Postal Service to deliver 6 days a week so it can continue serving as a critical lifeline for countless communities that need timely delivery of their essential needs.

This legislation will also make the Postal Service more transparent and accountable to the American people by making weekly local performance data publicly available online, enabling every single community to see exactly how the Postal Service is performing in their area.

I introduced this legislation in the Senate last year and have worked hand in hand with Ranking Member ROB PORTMAN from Ohio, as well as Chairwoman MALONEY and Ranking Member COMER on the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, to craft this bill.

Last month, the House passed this legislation with overwhelming bipartisan support. Last night, we saw this body advance it with significant bipartisan support once again. Now the Senate has a historic opportunity to move this legislation forward.

I am proud to have helped secure significant bipartisan support for our Senate companion bill, with a total of 14 Democratic and 14 Republican cosponsors backing the legislation.

Together, we can finally, after more than 15 years, pass this commonsense, bipartisan legislation to set the Postal Service on a stable financial foot and bring it into the future. We can support our dedicated and hard-working postal employees, as well as the customers whom they serve. We can set the Postal Service up for success so that families and small businesses, veterans, seniors, and all Americans can continue to rely on this critical public